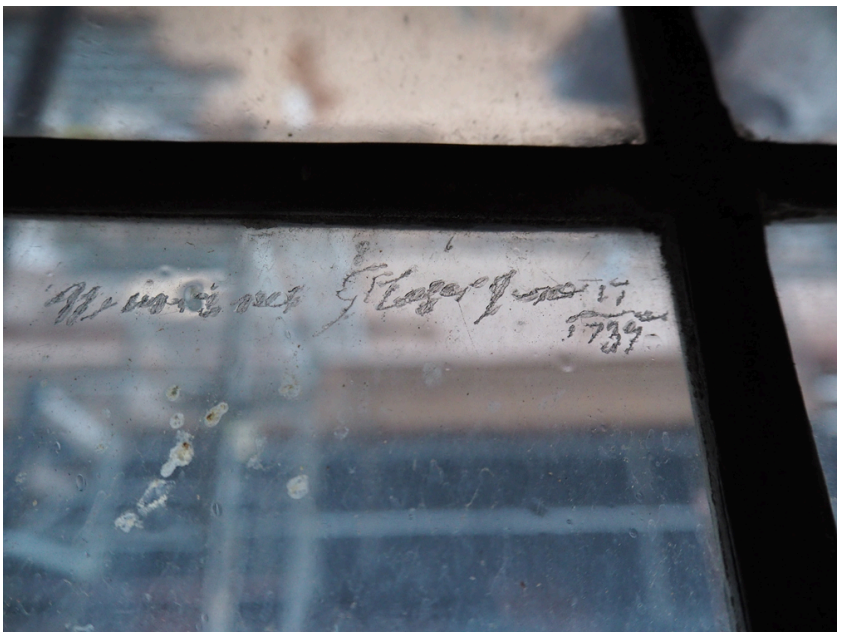
Worcestershire Recorder

Newsletter of the

WORCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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Mr K Bunckle

Mr R and Mrs D Colledge

Mrs V Fletcher

Mrs C Norcott

Ms N O'Hare

Charity No. 517092. Membership Secretary Tel: 01684 578142

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Neither the Committee of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society nor the Editor is responsible for any statements or opinions expressed in the Worcestershire Recorder, the authors of the contributions alone being responsible for the same.

Cover illustration: An 18th-century glass etching recorded during recent work at St Swithuns church, Worcester (see p. 11), © Brian Hoggard / Churches Conservation Trust.

Chair's Letter

Dear Members,

This is my last letter as Chair of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society as my three years are up and the role has passed to Dr Helen Loney. Helen will, I know, make a fantastic job of it and she will be ably supported, as I was, by a great committee. I will, however, be carrying on for a year as Deputy Chair working on website development and the digitisation of the Transactions.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two new faces to the Society. Vicky Fletcher is a new member of the Committee. Vicky is an Archivist at Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service but also a member of the Committee of Worcestershire Historical Society. Dr Theresa Oakley is our new Librarian. Theresa is the Academic Librarian for the University of Worcester and is keen to work with us to enable easier access and a higher profile for our collections at the Hive.

Over the last few months, we have had two in-person, rather than virtual, committee meetings and, as you know, there will be excursions this summer. However, cases of COVID are rising again so please keep an eye on your emails.

I am delighted to report that, after a competitive tender process, we have commissioned Brew, a website and marketing company based in Birmingham, to design and build our new website. Rachael Hall, our Webmaster, and I had the first meeting with Brew to officially start the project and the committee will be deciding on the design in the next few weeks. We are very short of photographs of people at events so if any of you have pictures of happy looking members, I would be delighted to receive them.

Due to other pressures the digitisation of the Transactions has not progressed very far, but preliminary work has been completed and this year we will be tendering for a company to digitise the volumes and produce associated information (titles, subjects, dates, authors etc) to make our site easy to search when the volumes are put on-line by the Archaeological Data Service (ADS). This ensures that the work of hundreds of authors over the past 150 years can be read by researchers in the UK and abroad. However, at least the latest two volumes of the Transactions at any one time will not be available online as first access to the latest research in the County is one of the key benefits for Members.

As I have mentioned before, the Committee is thinking about what we need to do to ensure WAS continues to keep existing members and attract new members and, as part of this, we want to ask you some basic questions about what you value about the Society and what changes you would like to see. The links to this survey are included in this edition of the *Recorder* (see p.4), but if anyone would prefer a paper copy, please just contact me.

Finally, I would like to say thanks to you for your continued support of WAS and thank you to all the members of the Committee I have worked with who have been so engaged and helpful. I would particularly like to thank Bob Ruffle for his knowledge, hard work and good humour. It has been a most interesting and engaging three years.

Victoria Bryant

News

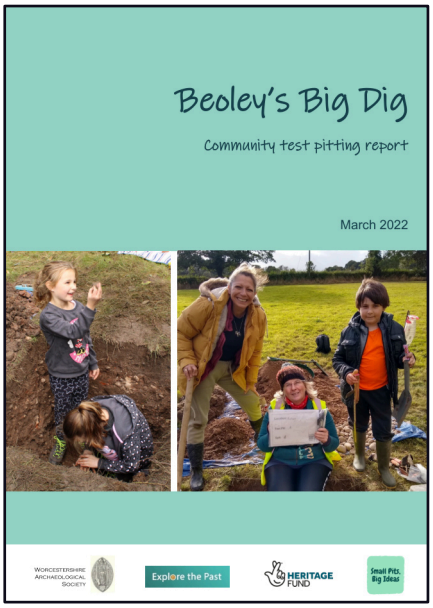
WAS Membership Survey 2022

Your Society needs you!

The Committee wants to hear your thoughts about the Worcestershire Archaeological Society: what do you value most about your membership, and what can we do to develop and grow in the years ahead? To share your perspective, please complete the WAS membership survey 2022, which is available online at https://bit.ly/3iNlL54. The survey has 10 questions and takes around five minutes to complete. All responses are fully anonymous.

For further information, or to request a paper copy, please contact the Chair, Helen Loney, at chairman@worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk.

Small Pits, Big Ideas update



In *Recorder* 104 (p. 4) Bob Ruffle updated the Society with news from the Heritage Lottery funded 'Small Pits, Big Ideas' community test pitting project. Progress has continued apace, and March 2022 saw the completion of the first project report on test pitting at Beoley. Freely available online at https://bit.ly/35ugKvc, the report describes the key discoveries from 13 test pits excavated by 56 volunteers across the village. More than 2000 fragments of pottery, glass, CBM, metalwork and clay tobacco pipe found during test pitting track Beoley's development from a dispersed medieval settlement to a nucleated 17th-century village, and suggest that the mysterious moated enclosure at Moss Lane Close might be the site of a medieval manor house burned to the ground in 1303.

The next phase of the project will begin in April 2022 with community test pitting in Wichenford, with further events planned for Badsey, Bewdley, and Wolverley in Spring and Summer 2022. If you wish to participate in any of these activities, please contact Nina O'Hare at explorethepast@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Test pitting at Box's Orchard, Wichenford

Margaret Burrows, North Worcestershire Archaeology Group

In 2019 thirteen test pits were excavated by members of the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group (NWAG) in a field formerly known as Box's Orchard, Wichenford. The project aimed to look for material evidence of medieval and post-medieval occupation in the form of building remains as well as artefacts to help to enhance our understanding of this area and its past. In April 2022 the group will participate in the 'Small Pits, Big Ideas' project (delayed because of Covid-19), which includes the Wichenford area, so this provided an ideal opportunity for

NWAG to start practicing Carenza Lewis' test pit methodology.

The Orchard's subsoil is red clay, which obviously created drainage problems for owners in the past, and beneath that some Keuper Marl was also found. Few of the 1m x 1m test pits went any deeper than 70cm because of the solid clay, and three pits ended at Bedrock. The finds were mainly post-medieval and modern, and included pottery, clay tobacco pipes, glass, CBM, and animal bone. Metal detecting across the whole site provided a mix of surface finds that included a horse's stirrup, a mole trap and two children's toy vehicles.

Historic graffiti in Worcestershire

Calling all graffiti hunters and church crawlers! Efforts are now underway to relaunch a survey of medieval and post-medieval graffiti in Worcestershire. If you would like to get involved, please contact the Editor at recorder@worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk.

New local history museum in Redditch

On 3 November 2021 the Redditch Local History Museum opened to the public for the first time. Supported by grants from National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Art Fund, the volunteer-led museum holds a rich collection of archives and artefacts that tell the story of Redditch before and after the 1960s 'New Town'. Based at 5 Market Place, the museum is open at 10am to 4pm every Thursday to Saturday, and is planning an exciting range of community outreach projects this summer and autumn. To find out more, visit the museum's website at https://rlhm.online/.

CBA West Midlands Summer Field Day

On 2 July 2022 the CBA West Midlands will host its annual Summer Field Day, to be held at Tysoe, Warwickshire. The programme includes presentations by members of The Making of Tysoe project team and guided walks around the village. Places are limited and prior booking is essential. For more information visit https://cbawm.archaeologyuk.org/meetings.php.

Stourbridge Glass Museum

After more than a decade of work, the Stourbridge Glass Museum officially opened to the public on 9 April 2022. Built on the site of the former Stuart Crystal works, the museum explores the glassmaking heritage of north Worcestershire and the Black Country, and provides a new home for the Stourbridge Glass collection after the 2015 closure of the Broadfield House

Glass Museum in Kingswinford. Visitor information, including opening times and admission prices, is available at https://www.stourbridgeglassmuseum.org.uk/.

Worcestershire Local History Forum AGM & Exhibition

On 21 May 2022 the Worcestershire Local History Forum (WLHF) will hold its AGM at the Beauchamp Community, Newland. The AGM will be followed by presentations of the Local History and Outstanding Achievement awards and a guided tour (£10 per person) of St Leonard's Church and the Beauchamp almshouses. For more details and to register your attendance, please contact Jane Tinklin at jane.tinklin@outlook.com.

On 6 August 2022 the WLHF is also hosting a members' exhibition day at Ronkswood Community Centre, Worcester. Attendees are invited to share displays, publications, and 20-minute presentations on topics related to Worcestershire's history. For more details and to register your attendance, please contact Jane Tinklin at jane.tinklin@outlook.com.

Further information about the WLHF is available at https://www.wlhf.org.uk/.

Making waves: Hokusai exhibition opens at Museums Worcestershire

The major new exhibition *'Hokusai's Great Wave: Reflections of Japan'* opened at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum on Saturday 2 April 2022. Exploring the extraordinary influence of Japanese art and culture in Europe and beyond, the exhibition will bring together for the first time outstanding prints and Samurai armour from the Museums Worcestershire collections (see *Recorder* 104, p. 7), Hokusai's 'The Great Wave', and beautiful pieces from the Tate Gallery, Bewdley Museum, and the Museum of Royal Worcester. The exhibition has been made possible with funding from the Weston Loan Programme and Art Fund, and will be accompanied by a curator's tour and bitesize gallery talk in May 2022. To book tickets for the tour and talk, visit https://bit.ly/3LKkKap.

Worcester Town Clerk and the India Connection

Kerry Whitehouse, Museums Worcestershire

While researching Worcester City Museum's World Cultures Asian collection, a fascinating little mystery came to light. Worcester Museum Curators are often intrigued by how some older objects came into the collections as unfortunately, very little documentation is in existence. When a rare line in one of the oldest accession registers caught the eye of the World Cultures Curator, she decided to investigate further.

'A Shan Hat, a pair of Burmese and a pair of Indian slippers, also a model of a canoe from Mr. Sidebottom.'

This donation came from an entry from July 1847. Who was Mr Sidebottom? How did he obtain his small collection?

A little bit of digging revealed that Mr Sidebottom was Mr Charles Sidebottom, Town Clerk of Worcester and he lived on Lark Hill. Charles also held other offices in town. He was Stipendiary Magistrate, Judge of the Court of Pleas, as well as the Town Clerk; offices of which he is documented to have held in 1836. The 1851 census tells us that Charles still lived on Lark Hill with his wife Mary and four children and still held offices of Barrister and Police Magistrate. Charles John Sidebottom died on 26th October 1878 aged 88. His will lists his executors; two sons, Charles Edward Sidebottom Venner who lived in Great Malvern, a Captain in Her Majesty's Royal Navy and Leonard Sidebottom Venner of Cowesfield House near Salisbury, Wiltshire who was a Lieutenant Colonel in Her Majesty's Army.

Thanks to our friends in Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, a bit more exploring revealed another person. Charles Frederick Sidebottom-Venner of Worcester was listed in The London Gazette dated 7th January, 1879. The entry talks of him being in the military, as infantry from Worcester: 'Gent., to be Second Lieutenant' and he is reported to have died in India. He is not listed in Charles Sidebottom's will of 1878, but he must surely be a relative, or perhaps his middle name was inaccurately reported? Is this how Charles Sidebottom, Town Clerk of Worcester, obtained his Indian slippers?

As we dig more into the origins of the World Cultures Collection, we begin to see a pattern of objects being donated by Royal Navy Captains or people of rank who served in the army, so it is just as likely that the objects may have also come as family souvenir gifts to the donor, and so to the museum.

Heritage crime at Severn Stoke

On 27 January 2022 the Grade II*-listed medieval church of St Denys at Severn Stoke was damaged after thieves stole lead from the church roof. The theft has exacerbated damage from recent stormy weather, resulting in as much as 25cm of water flooding the church interior. Lead thefts from churches have become a pressing issue in recent years, with no fewer than 115 cases reported in 2020/21 and 1069 cases in 2017-19. In September 2021 Historic England published new guidance documents advising communities on how to reduce the threat of metal theft, and

offering recommendations on alternative roofing materials. To read these documents, visit https://bit.ly/3DMOIb5.

Wyre Forest Heritage Trail

Hot on the heels of the Droitwich Augmented Reality Heritage Trail (see *Recorder* 104, p. 8), the new Wyre Forest Heritage Trail app was released on 31 March 2022. Commissioned by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration on behalf of Wyre Forest District Council, the app uses modern smartphone technology to take visitors on an accessible guided tour of historic buildings and sites in Bewdley, Kidderminster, and Stourport town centres, including the Severn Valley Railway, Holbrook's Vinegar Works, and the original Frank Freeman's Dancing Club. The app is free to download via the App Store, Google Play, and Wyre Forest District Council website (https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/heritagetrail).

Gloucestershire Dendrochronology Project

Members that attended Ellie Marsh's lecture to the Society on Tewkesbury Abbey may recall discussion of the Gloucestershire Dendrochronology Project. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project seeks to determine the precise years of construction of 36 medieval buildings in Gloucester, Newent, and Tewkesbury through tree-ring dating. Details of the preliminary results have been publicised in a series of online lectures, which can be viewed at https://youtu.be/bYc17Gvcz7o (Tewkesbury), https://youtu.be/32NC8KmgCmU (Newent), and https://youtu.be/g4RQelVs29g (Gloucester).

Excursions Programme 2022

Tuesday 24 May: Tewkesbury Abbey and Town

Organised by Ginny Wagstaff

Day visit starting at 10.15. Members' own transport.

This trip has been arranged as a follow up to the WAS Lecture on Monday April 4th by Ellie March: '*Tewkesbury Abbey: The archaeology and history of a great medieval Benedictine abbey in the west'*. The day will start with a guided tour of the Abbey starting at 10.30am. This will be followed by tea/coffee and cake in the abbey café. There is level access to the abbey via the main gates and the North Path and there are ramps around the abbey allowing access for wheelchair users to the majority of areas.

The rest of the day will be available for a self-guided tour of this extraordinary historic town, which has 650 listed buildings, including a number with timber framing. A map and introductory leaflet will be provided on the day. Members may wish to visit the Heritage and Visitor centre which has free admission.

Cost, which includes the refreshments at the abbey will be £12 for members and £15 for non-members. All day parking is available within easy walking distance of the abbey for £4, at

Gander Lane Long Stay car park GL20 5PG. The short walk to the abbey from there provides the most wonderful view of the building.

Tuesday 26 July: Cleeve Prior Heritage Trust and The Cleeve Prior Hovel

Organised by Chris Wolstencroft

Afternoon visit, 1.00 to 4.00pm. Members' own transport.

The visit will be centred on the Field Barn, Evesham Road, Cleeve Prior WR11 8JX. Parking will be in the orchard of the Field Barn. Refreshments will be provided. Details can be found on the Trust's website at https://www.cleeveprioriorheritagetrust.co.uk. We will have an introduction to the Trust's work and an outline talk on The Market Gardening Heritage Project and Mr Wheeler's Hovel in particular. Members will have the opportunity to visit this Hovel time capsule. Nina O'Hare (WAAS) provided us with an excellent lecture on 1 November 2021, covering the history of market gardening in the Vale of Evesham and the Project. This is now an opportunity to see a practical result of one of the outcomes of the Project.

Cost including refreshments - members £5.00 or £6 for non-members.

Thursday 11 August: Romanesque churches of the Teme Valley

An afternoon tour, starting at 2 pm led by Tim Bridges, using members' own transport, to look at some of the Romanesque churches which figured in Professor Malcolm Thurlby's paper read to the Society in October 2019. This will be a great opportunity to follow up on the observations Malcolm illustrated in his lecture, for example at Stockton-on-Teme (illustrated), Eastham, Bockleton or elsewhere in the valley. Ending with tea included at one of the churches or in Tenbury.

Final details are not yet available. Cost is likely to be around £12-15 for members. £13-16 for non-members.

Thursday 8 September: Bewdley town walk and museum

Organised by Bob Ruffle

Afternoon visit starting at 2pm. Members' own transport.

For those members who thought they knew Bewdley, this is a revelatory afternoon guided walk round this attractive and historic riverside town, with many timber-framed buildings, a Georgian church and bridge, and a fine Museum, where the tour will start and finish. Following the walk, the Museum will put on a demonstration of clay pipe or rope making, and the afternoon will finish with tea in the Museum café.

The cost including refreshments will be about £14 for members and £15 for non-members.

Features

Progress at St Swithun's

Brian Hoggard, Churches Conservation Trust

This article is intended to be a short summary of the activity on the site and some of the interesting discoveries made since contractors began work in late 2019. Funded by the NLHF, the project involves the restoration of St Swithun's and support for an activity plan to turn it into 'Sound and Art at St Swithuns' – a centre for culture and the arts in Worcester.

Under-floor heating system & archaeological discoveries

In order to install the new under-floor heating system, gravestones on the floor of the church needed to be lifted. This led to the discovery of several brick-lined box tombs (probably family tombs), some brick barrel vaults containing high status individual burials, and a Victorian coffin-shaped tomb. It was possible to look into one of the barrel vaults through a tiny hole, revealing an ornate coffin with an impressive-looking cross lain atop it. Staff from Worcestershire Archaeology kept a watching brief on the site as the tombs were exposed, and took a photographic record of the works. Buildings archaeologist Tim Cornah used these photos to create a 3D render of the site, which can be viewed online at https://skfb.ly/6QYGr.

Ann Freame

Groundworks on the church floor revealed a coffin shaped tomb with slabs laid across it. Underneath the slabs was a highly ornate upholstered coffin, which contained a brass plate giving the details of the deceased. The tomb belongs to Ann Freame, a member of the Guild of Upholsterers who died in 1850 aged 82. There was a family of upholsterers with the surname Freame based at 10 and 11 St Swithin's Street just around the corner.[1]

Fig 1: Coffin of Ann Freame, © Brian Hoggard / Churches Conservation Trust

Installing under-floor heating

Once the floor level had been excavated to the required depth – which included reducing the height of Mrs Freame's tomb by a couple of brick courses – all of the tombs were recorded, and new under-floor heating was installed. Quite a lot of disarticulated human bone was recovered during this process, which have now been re-interred respectfully beneath the floor in the south-east of the building. Some of this bone may have belonged to individuals who had been buried beneath the floor of the pre-1730s nave.

Graffiti in the bell-ringing chamber

Anyone who knows St Swithun's well will be aware of the large quantity of graffiti scratched into the plaster around the window in the bell-ringing chamber. The tower is a 15th-century building, but would have been re-plastered when the church was substantially re-built in the

1730s. All of the visible graffiti in this area post-dates that re-build. Most of it is initial and date grafitti, but others have another motive: protection from evil. One of the marks is a complex compass-drawn daisy-wheel. This type of mark has its origins as an ancient solar symbol, and represents the light of the sun.[2] Above it is the date 1754 and a pair of Marian marks.

Graffiti on the tower stair

On the left hand side before entering the bell-ringing chamber is a W sign (overlapping V's) and a crossed capital letter I. The VV is an example of a Marian mark (Fig 2), a sign of the Virgin Mary used to protect the entrance to the chamber. The crossed I is one of the older signs for Christ ('Iesu'), and is followed by a C for Christ. These marks are carved directly into stone and could well be medieval. Just to the right of the entrance of the bell-ringing chamber behind the door on the tower stair is a crossed I and B carved into the stone. This may represent 'Jesus Benedictus', a blessing from Jesus before ascending the tower.

Fig 2: Marian mark on the tower stair, © Brian Hoggard / Churches Conservation Trust

Discovery of etchings on the glass

One of the site workers discovered a fascinating etching in the glass on the south wall in the window closest to the organ gallery. It appears to be someone's name with the word 'glazier', and is dated 1739 (see cover). This etching is upside-down and the wrong way round when viewed from inside the building; the marks had obviously been made before the glass was incorporated into the window.

Discoveries about the roof structure

Site manager Andrew Morris has suggested that the roof could originally have been a double-hip arrangement, and it seems fairly clear that this was indeed the case. This may have been the first design for the roof during the 1730s rebuild, and was subsequently roofed over to accommodate the clock mechanism. Andrew also noted that many timbers, particularly at east end of roof, are re-purposed moulded medieval timbers from the original church. Further evidence of recycling can be seen on the roof, where many larger roof tiles seem to derive from the medieval church.

Fig 3: Reused Romanesque masonry in the south wall © Brian Hoggard / Churches Conservation Trust

Romanesque decorated stones in roof

Continuing the recycling theme, two decorated stones were discovered in the upper parts of the south wall within the roof. These are clearly

decorated in the Romanesque style, one showing typical chevrons (Fig 3) and the other part of a repeating x o pattern. The presence of these stones in the south wall confirms that it was built of recycled medieval stone from the preceding Norman church. Romanesque voussoirs were previously discovered when a door to the vestry was created in 1911.

Heritage Detectives

We have had a team of 'Heritage Detectives' who have been busy working on researching some of the many names found on the memorials and plaques within the church. We have also had a University placement from Worcester who has been conducting historical research using street directories and other sources. All of this research will be collated and presented in due course.

The interior of the building has been repainted in a clean white paint and looks fantastic. We are looking forward to welcoming people back into the building in late 2021.

Notes

1. Information kindly supplied by Jesse Wheeler and Jim Berrow (FOSS).

2. For details about the daisy-wheel and these Christian marks see B. Hoggard, *Magical House Protection. The Archaeology of Counter-Witchcraft* (Oxford, 2019).

Archery practice or ritual practice? Late medieval groove marks at the church of St John in Bedwardine, Worcester

Murray Andrews and Richard Lloyd

The medieval church of St John in Bedwardine has been celebrated as *'the most picturesque and venerable [...] of any of the Worcester churches'* (Walker 1858, 326), and has drawn the attention of architectural historians for its sturdy Romanesque arcade, impressive Perpendicular west tower, and fine collection of 15th-century window glass (Bridges 2000, 234; Brookes and Pevsner 2007, 712-13). Rather less interest, however, has been given to an intriguing series of groove marks on the exterior masonry, 152 examples of which were recorded by the authors in March 2022 (Fig 1).

Fig 1: Groove marks on a Perpendicular style window sill in the south aisle of the church of St John in Bedwardine, Worcester

The grooves consist of parallel short- to medium-length linear cuts into the surface of the building stone, and have moderately sloped sides and gentle rounded bases. Their regular forms and restricted spatial distribution leave no doubt as to their human, rather than geological, origin. The examples at St Johns appear in six zones of the church exterior:

- Six grooves measuring 17–37mm wide and 21–39mm deep on the west wall of the west tower;
- Five grooves measuring 15–66mm wide and 10–30mm deep on the south wall of the west tower;
- 43 grooves measuring 22–117mm wide and 4–70mm deep on the central gable wall of the south aisle;
- 43 grooves measuring 24–100mm wide and 6–116mm deep on the east gable wall of the south aisle;
- 34 grooves measuring 3–63mm wide and 5–34mm deep on the south wall of the south aisle east of the gables;
- 21 grooves measuring 15–80mm wide and 12–55mm deep on the east wall of the south aisle.

The dating of these groove marks rests chiefly on distributional evidence. Since all of the recorded examples appear on late medieval masonry, and none on restored Victorian fabric, it seems reasonable to attribute them to the medieval or early post-medieval periods (Fig 2). A late medieval dating is further suggested by the concentration of groove marks on the late 14th- to early 15th-century south aisle, which has produced nearly 13 times as many examples as the late 15th-century west tower. It seems probable, therefore, that most of the grooves were made in the century after the Black Death, although a smaller number may have been produced in the years preceding – and perhaps following – the Tudor Reformation.

Fig 2: Groove marks on the south aisle of the church of St John in Bedwardine, Worcester; note their absence from areas of restored Victorian masonry

Groove marks have been frequently identified at medieval religious sites in Britain, and large regional assemblages are known from the churches of St Alphege, Solihull (West Midlands; Wright 2021), and St John the Baptist, Stokesay (Shropshire; Sayce 1936, 81). Informal research has identified a number of examples at Worcestershire sites, including the Edgar Tower at Worcester Cathedral, the church of SS Peter and Paul, Rock, and the preaching cross base at the church of St John the Baptist, Suckley. Their intended function, however, remains unclear. One theory, rooted in oral tradition, interprets groove marked church masonry as ‘arrow stones’: convenient objects used by medieval archers to sharpen their arrows while practicing in churchyards (Owen 1896, 159-61; Sayce 1936, 80-1). Recent work by Wright (2021) has cast doubt on these suggestions, observing that most English churchyards were not large enough to accommodate training butts, and that medieval archers typically practiced with rounded steel piles or blunts rather than sharped broadhead arrows. Circumstantial evidence from St Johns

supports Wright's critique: at its maximum east to west length of 80m (87.5yds), the churchyard is less than half as long as the 201m (220yds) minimum distance legislated for archery practice during the reign of Henry VIII (Davies 2007, 226). There is also no obvious reason why practitioners should prefer to risk training in a crowded churchyard instead of the open tracts of countryside in its surroundings, let alone the designated archery butts 0.8km north-east of St Johns beside Worcester's city wall.

In contrast to the secular 'arrow stone' theory, Wright (2021) has interpreted groove marking as the consequence of a fundamentally ritualised medieval practice: the deliberate removal of consecrated dust and stone for use in Christian folk remedies, to be consumed as a cure against fever, dysentery, and other infirmities. Though rooted in evidence from Irish and continental European anthropology, including 19th-century accounts of contemporary groove marking in French, German, and Swiss churches, this counter-theory is supported by textual evidence for the religious significance of 'holy dust' in the middle ages, including two intriguing accounts from 13th-century Worcestershire. In the first case, an Irishwoman suffering from five years of infirmity was purportedly healed by miraculous dust removed from the tomb of St Wulfstan at Worcester Cathedral, which turned into salt on her arrival home (Halliwell 1840, 73). In the second, a Rutland pilgrim claimed to have been cured of monoplegia after rubbing his arm with holy dust taken from the tomb of Simon de Montfort at Evesham Abbey (Halliwell 1840, 107). In light of this evidence, it is not inconceivable that the groove marks at St Johns reflect similar attempts to employ 'holy dust' in folk medicine and ritual on the outskirts of medieval Worcester.

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A medieval cross from Pershore Bridge

Chris Guy, Bruce Watson and Matthew Winfield

The former course of the A44 (B4084) leading south from Pershore to Evesham crosses the twin channels of the River Avon via two historic structures, generally known as the North and

South Bridges. The North Bridge is a three-arched structure of 18th-century date, with two pairs of cutwaters and small recesses on either side of its roadway; it spans a subsidiary channel and today serves as a causeway and a flood relief channel (Hunt 1994, 185-7). The South Bridge is a six-arched structure with five cutwaters or recesses on its northern or upstream side. It has one large central arch, flanked by five smaller, elliptical arches. Originally, the medieval bridge may have possessed seven matching small arches (Hunt 1993; WSM05574).

Fig 1: The Pershore cross head and base, photographed in July 2019

The earliest surviving documentary evidence concerning this bridge dates from 1290 when there was a bequest of 12*d*. for its repair (Page and Willis-Bund 1924, 151-5). Pontage grants were awarded for its repair in 1322 and 1337 (Cooper 2006, 158-9). On 24 July 1346 Edward III ordered a commission inquire into the 'ruinous' state of Pershore Bridge and determine who was responsible for its repair. On 10 October 1346 an inquisition into the condition of the bridge and how the money from the 1337 pontage grant had been spent was ordered, as it had still not been repaired (Maxwell Lyte 1903, 183-233). The men of Pershore claimed that the Abbot of Westminster, who owned the surrounding land, was responsible for the repair of the bridge. After prolonged litigation, it was agreed in 1351 that the town and the abbot would equally share the responsibility for the repair of the bridge. The bridge was again described as ruinous in 1388 and 1607 (Page and Willis-Bund 1924, 151-5). During his travels in *c.*1538-45 the antiquarian John Leland noted that stonework was being removed from Elmley Castle to repair Pershore Bridge (Chandler 1993, 517).

On 24 August 1955 two stone blocks described as a 'cross and base' were separately recovered during dredging of the channel below the large central arch of the South Bridge (*Berrow's Worcester Journal,* 26 August 1955, 9). It was immediately noticed that both pieces possessed the matching elements of a mortice and tenon-type joint and could be fitted back together. Other masonry was apparently recovered at the same time, including 'abbey-like stones', presumably ashlar or moulded stone blocks, but no detailed record of this other material has been found.

This masonry may derive from the June 1644 destruction of the central portion of the bridge during the English Civil War, when it was destroyed by the retreating Royalist army (Hunt 1994, 186-91; Page and Willis-Bund 1924, 151). While it is universally accepted that the two central arches of the medieval bridge were rebuilt during the mid-17th century as a single span, exactly when this modification took place is uncertain. This issue will be discussed in an article in the next issue of the *Recorder*.

Due to extensive lichen growth, the geology of the two pieces of masonry is difficult to determine from visual inspection (Fig 1). The cross is probably constructed of Cotswold or Oolite limestone and its plinth is apparently a local sandstone, probably Old Red Sandstone. Each of the arms of this Latin or Roman cross are decorated with a quatrefoil linear cusped decoration, typical of Gothic tracery, probably 13th or 14th century date on stylistic grounds; it is 51.15cm high and 36cm wide. The cross has been cemented into a square socket set in the centre of the upper face of an almost square (44 by 45cm) crumbly block, which is 29cm high and now serves a plinth. In cross-section the upper portion of this block has a five sided chamfered or splayed profile peaking in a narrow horizonal top surface; it has a flat base. The design of this block suggests that it originally served as part of the coping of the bridge parapet. Currently, the cross is oriented at right angles to the axis of the chamfered faces, but it seems more likely that it was originally intended to be aligned parallel with these faces.

Fig 2: The replacement cross and inscription at Maisemore Bridge

The design of the cross has prompted suggestions that it originally served as a finial. The cross and its base were for many years displayed within the garden of Evesham Almonry Museum. It was donated to Pershore Heritage Centre in 1999, and it was subsequently relocated to the Pershore Town Hall walkway. In 2018, due to concerns about the physical deterioration of the masonry, it was relocated to the ground floor of the Town Hall fire escape.

The find-spot of this stonework strongly suggests that it was originally part of an undocumented cross set up on the centre of the South Bridge. Leland, who in *c*.1538-45 either crossed or visited Pershore Bridge, did not mention the existence of a cross on it. This omission is puzzling, as he recorded the presence of many English bridge chapels shortly before they were closed as chantries in 1547-48, but never recorded any bridge crosses during his travels. One possibility is that English bridge and wayside crosses or shrines were relatively common features before the Reformation (1533-53), as they are in France, Spain and Italy today, so Leland took their existence for granted and did not bother to mention their presence.

The presence of the cross on the riverbed could be interpreted as evidence of it having been dismantled and thrown into the river during the Reformation. In early 1552 John Hooper was appointed Bishop of Worcester. A clergyman of extreme Protestant views, Hooper was very keen of the removal of public manifestations of traditional worship like statues and crucifixes (Newcombe 2004, 1001). It is quite possible, then, that the cross was tipped into the river during 1552-53. Alternatively, if it survived this period of iconoclasm, it may have fallen into the river in 1644 when the central portion of the bridge was destroyed.

Why might a cross have been set up on the medieval bridge? The answer is that during the medieval period building or repairing bridges was seen as pious, charitable work, and to remind people of this association many English bridges possessed chapels (including Droitwich – see *Recorder* 98, pp. 8-9), crosses, plaques (e.g. Stanford Bridge) and shrines (Duffy 1992, 367). For instance, there was a medieval cross and an inscription on the approach to Maisemore Bridge in Gloucestershire, which was still in existence in 1779. However, in 1956 the cross was reinstated on the eastern approach to Maisemore Bridge (Fig 2). It consists of a funerary type monument topped by a small wheel-headed cross. The base of the monument bears this inscription: 'THIS CROSS WAS TAKEN FROM ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH GLOUCESTER IN 1956 / A CROSS WHICH STOOD ON A / BRIDGE BUILT ABOUT A.D. 1200 / BORE THIS INSCRIPTION IN LATIN AND NORMAN FRENCH / "IN HONOUR OF / OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST / WHO WAS CRUCIFIED FOR US / WILLIAM FITZ-ANKETIL / OF WILTON MADE THIS CROSS / AND THIS SAME / WILLIAM FITZ-ANKETIL / BUILT THE BRIDGE OF/ MAISEMORE.' (transcribed in 2017). In 1485-6 a contract for building a new timber bridge at Newark in Nottinghamshire included erecting 'a cross in the middle' (Salzman 1952, 546). During the Reformation almost all the English bridge chapels, many of which had a chantry function, were closed, and only a few examples that served as parochial chapels (e.g. Droitwich) remained in use. The crosses, plaques and shrines on English bridges were often removed by Protestant iconoclasts, and today there are no surviving examples of English medieval bridge crosses. It is not surprising, therefore, that ex-situ examples of English bridge crosses and shrines are also very rare. The Pershore crosshead represents the only probable surviving ex-situ example of a bridge cross that discovered during research into British bridge chapels and related monuments to date.

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Clay tobacco pipes from Astley

Murray Andrews

Since 2009 the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group (NWAG) has been occasionally presented with artefacts unearthed by members of the public in the north of the county. One such offering is a small collection of 65 clay tobacco pipe fragments (weight 221.4g) presented to NWAG by the late Dave Parker, a prolific metal detectorist and hobby fieldwalker from Astley, near Stourport-on-Severn. The exact source of this material is unclear, but bag labels and local testimonials suggest that all or most of the pipes were found in Astley, most probably in the fields adjoining Scots Lane on the north side of Astley Burf (NGR SO 808 684). This is

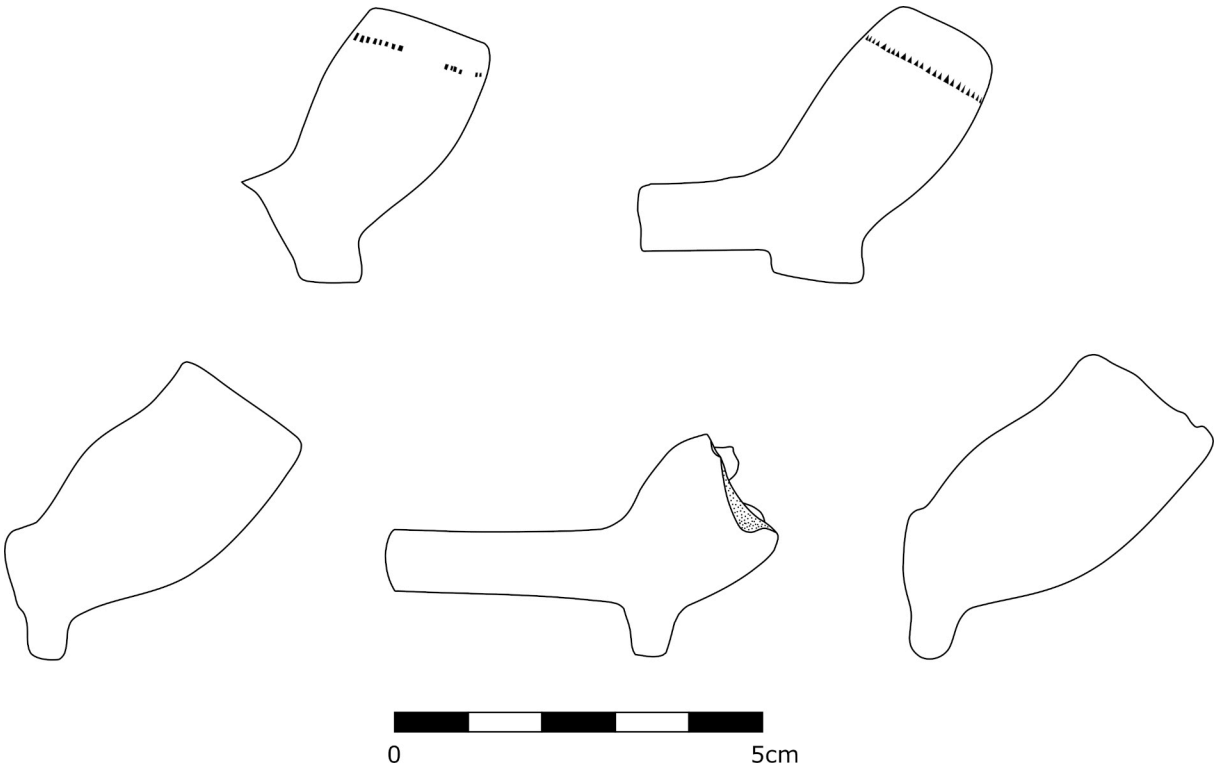

Fig 1: 17th- and 18th-century clay tobacco pipes from Astley

an area of considerable historical interest: Astley Burf's place-name contains the Old English element *beorg* ('barrow, tumulus'; Mawer and Stenton 1927, 33), suggestive of a prehistoric monument or early medieval meeting place, while Scots Lane itself may represent an ancient boundary to Penny Park, an enclosure described in Elizabethan documents (F. Llewellyn, *pers. comm.*, 15 October 2020). The pipes themselves are probably domestic waste from adjacent settlement, redeposited on the fields through early modern manuring.

Despite its coarse provenance, the Parker collection merits record as a group of post-medieval artefacts from a poorly-understood part of the county. Among the material are 13 dateable bowl and heel or spur fragments, eight of which were produced in the Welsh Marches (Fig 1): these include two north Herefordshire or south Shropshire pipes dated to *c.*1660-90 (Peacey 1996), and six Broseley pipes dated to c.1670-90, *c.*1690-1720, and *c.*1680-1730 respectively (Atkinson (1975) type 3, x1; type 4, x4; type 5, x1). The presence of so many pipes from Herefordshire and Shropshire manufactories tallies with evidence from Newport Street, Worcester, and reflects their domination of the Worcestershire pipe market during the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Peacey 2015, 172).

Fig 2: Bowl fragment with Russell's Worcester pipe mark, 1818-68

The five other bowl and heel/spur fragments are 18th- and 19th-century types of uncertain manufacture: two are dated c.1690-1730 (Oswald 1975, 40, no. 20), two c.1730-80 (Oswald 1975, 40, no. 22), and one c.1840-60 (Oswald 1975, 54, no. 18). Some of these pipes may have been made in Worcestershire, as one undiagnostic bowl fragment certainly was: this bears the incuse moulded mark of John Russell's Worcester pipe factory (Fig 2), which was situated in the area of Cripplegate Park between 1818 and 1868 (Moore 2021).

The bulk of the collection, however, consists of incomplete stem fragments, dated on the basis of stem-bore measurements (Harrington 1978). Like the bowls and heel/spurs, the stems mostly date to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, reinforcing the common provenance of the collection. Taken as a whole, the clay pipes collected by Parker offer a small but important snapshot of tobacco consumption in north Worcestershire during the 17th to 19th centuries.

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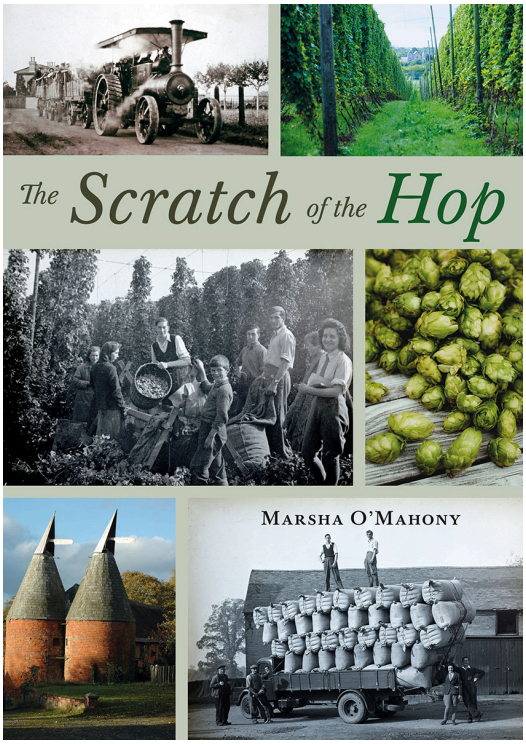
Book Reviews

The Scratch of the Hop: Hop Picking in Herefordshire, Worcestershire & Shropshire. **By M. O'Mahony. Logaston Press, Eardisley, 2021. Pp. 288. Price £15. ISBN 9781910839447.**



Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries great swathes of the Worcestershire countryside were seasonally cloaked in pale-green hops, the centrepiece of a rural industry that drew in thousands of men, women, and children from near and far. Many of the old hopyards are now closed, but their legacy can be traced in a landscape peppered by kilns, poles, and wires, and in the memories of those who worked – and, in some cases, still work – to bring the harvest home. This attractive new book by local historian and journalist Marsha O'Mahony provides an evocative account of the history of hop farming in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire, rooted in a rich seam of evidence from documentary and oral history.

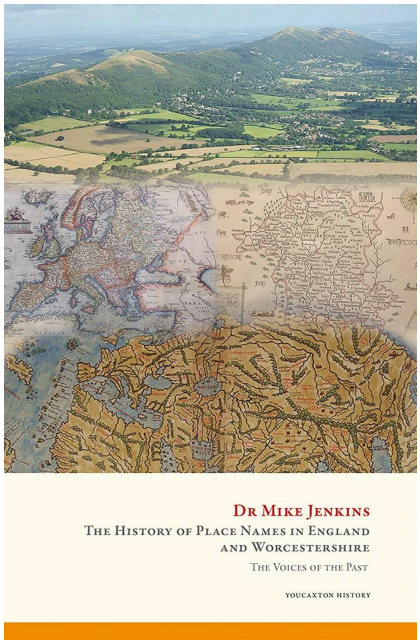
Rather than a straightforward chronological description of the growth and decline of hop farming in the three border counties, O'Mahony offers a thematic narrative that follows the industry from the field to the drinking glass and beyond. Two introductory chapters (Chs. 1-2) explore the origins and influence of hop farming, revealing the impact of a 16th-century

Flemish imported plant on the culture, literature, music, and art of 18th- to 20th-century England. Seven further chapters follow hops through the industrial cycle, with detailed overviews of the growing process (Ch. 3), the harvest (Chs. 4-5), drying and processing (Ch. 6), marketing (Chs. 7-8), and brewing and consumption (Ch. 9). These chapters place the author's talents on full display, transforming what might otherwise be a dry technical description of 19th- and 20th-century agriculture into a lively reconstruction of rural life, whose cast includes the irate farmer Mr Davies (p. 88), the evangelist preacher William Luff (p. 114), the medicine man Gypsy Lee (p. 132), and the meths-drinking Bromyard picker Old Mrs Greer (p. 94). The conclusion explores the ongoing process of hop research as well as the future of the industry (Ch. 10), highlighting the challenges and possibilities it faces in the early 21st century. There is also a valuable glossary of hop farming terms, which helps the reader to distinguish their kerf from their scuppet, and their booker from their ganger.

The value of this book is not restricted to O'Mahony's authorial expertise, but extends also to the remarkable body of evidence that is brought to the table. Much of the author's source material is previously unpublished, and includes a rich seam of photographs and plans – many in private collections – as well as extensive gleanings from oral history (including some familiar faces from the Society). Significantly, the author's reliance on oral history does not simply cloak the industry in romantic nostalgia: correspondents illustrate the sometimes harsh experiences of working class pickers from the Black Country and South Wales, which included poor accommodation (pp. 88-92), periodic outbreaks of typhoid and diphtheria (p. 131), and frequent strikes over low pay and working conditions (pp. 112-13).

Readers of the *Recorder* will find a great deal of interest and enjoyment in this book, which casts fresh light on a once-familiar feature of Worcestershire's agrarian and cultural landscape. Lavishly illustrated in full colour, it is a remarkable bargain at just £15, and will make a wonderful addition to many members' bookshelves.

The History of Place Names in England and Worcestershire: the Voices of the Past. **By M. Jenkins. YouCaxton, Shrewsbury, 2021. Pp. 240. Price £11.99. ISBN 9781913425784.**



This affordable and attractive new book by Mike Jenkins, a retired medical doctor and local historian, offers an accessible introduction to place names as source material for English history, using Worcestershire evidence as a central case study. The book is arranged in three parts. In Part 1 (Chs. 1-3) the author provides a general introduction to place names and language, while Part 2 (Chs. 4-15) contains a broad introduction to the population history of Britain. Part 3 (Chs. 16-25) will be of greatest interest to readers of the *Recorder*, and explores some of the place name evidence for the settlement of Worcestershire from the pre-Roman to Post-Medieval periods.

The book provides a useful service to the general reader, signposting many interesting place names and etymologies that reveal the physical and mental topographies of

Worcestershire's past inhabitants. Among the more interesting names discussed by the author are Malvern, a Celtic 'bald hill' (pp. 94-5), Pinvin, the fen of the Mercian king Penda (p. 132), and Bewdley, a 'beautiful place' for its Norman (and current) inhabitants (p. 174). Significant archaeological finds are noted throughout, adding broader context to the onomastic discussion.

The text, however, would benefit from further editing. The discussion of Palaeolithic to Bronze Age migrations, for example, is interesting but largely irrelevant, and a more thorough approach to referencing would significantly tighten the discussion. Readers should be warned that some of the etymologies presented in the text are tenuous. The Rhydd (nr Upton-upon-Severn), for example, is described as a 'Celtic' name (OW *rhyd,* 'ford or shallow river crossing'; p. 98), but is instead a recent 'Celticised' spelling of an Old English name (OE *geryd*, 'cleared land'; Mawer and Stenton 1927, 212). Similarly, the discussion of the 'Anglo-Saxon' tribal name *Hwicce* (p. 114) is centred on Yeates' fanciful and widely-rejected discussion of Iron Age 'sacred vessels'; the most recent scholarship suggests a Brittonic derivation instead (**Hæ-wïkk*, 'the most excellent ones'; Coates 2013). Despite these issues, this is a pleasing and enjoyable book, written in an accessible style for the non-specialist reader.

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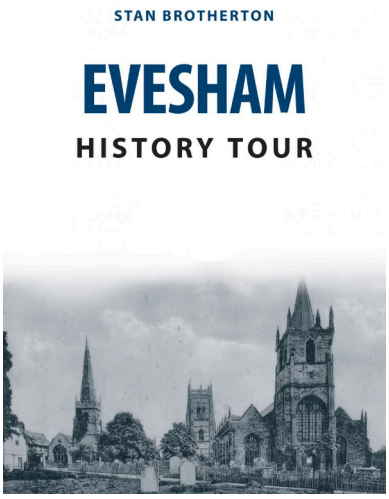
On 15 March 2022 Amberley Publishing published **Stan Brotherton**'s *Evesham History Tour*. The book provides a guide tour around the town's well-known streets and buildings, showing how its famous landmarks used to look and how they have changed over the years, as well as exploring its lesser-known sights and hidden corners. With the help of a handy location map, readers are invited to follow a timeline of events and discover for themselves the changing face of Evesham. The book will be reviewed in the Autumn 2022 edition of the *Recorder,* and is available in paperback, Kindle, Kobo, and iBook formats for £8.99 RRP. Copies are available from the publisher (https://www.amberley-books.com/evesham-history-tour.html) and all good bookshops.



Call for contributions!

Do you have any news, events, or research that you would like to share with the Society? If so, we'd love to hear from you! The Editor welcomes contributions on topics relating to the archaeology and heritage of Worcestershire for publication in the Autumn 2022 edition of the *Worcestershire Recorder*. Please send news items (max 500 words) and short articles (max 1500 words) by email to recorder@worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk no later than 1 September 2022.

Bronze Age palstave (1500-1300 BC) found at Broadway in 2021 (© PAS/Derby Museums Trust, CC BY 2.0)

WAS 2021-22 Lecture Programme

Meetings take place at 7.30pm. Zoom video-conferencing will be used up to and including 4 April, with the Berkeley Lecture to be held in-person at Fladbury Village Hall, WR10 2QB.

20 September	**'Worcestershire Church Bells - Craftsmanship and Sound'**
	Chris Pickford
11 October	**'Westwood House, Droitwich: Sir John 'Lusty' Pakington and his Grand Design'**
	Nick Molyneux (Historic England)
1 November	**'Grown in the Vale - Hidden Tales of Market Gardening'**
	Nina O'Hare (WAAS)
22 November	**'Shrewsbury Castle and Other Shire-Town Castles'**
	Nigel Baker
13 December	**'It's just a load of old rubbish: an archaeological study of industrial waste from the Worcester Porcelain Factories'**
	Helen Loney and Andrew Hoaen (University of Worcester)
10 January	**'Crime, Poverty and Pub Licencing: Local Petitioning in Worcestershire, *c.*1600-1800'**
	Brodie Waddell (Birkbeck, University of London)
31 January	**'Ringing the Dead to Heaven: Worcester Cathedral and the Lost Belltower of St Michael'**
	Michael Shapland (Archaeology South-East / UCL Centre for Applied Archaeology)
21 February	**'Europe's Lost Frontiers - the Archaeology of Doggerland'**
	Vince Gaffney (University of Bradford)
14 March	**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, followed by: 'Eat Like Your Ancestors: the Archaeology of Food and Farmed Landscape and the Future of Food (a West Midlands Perspective)**
	Liz Pearson Mann (WAAS)
4 April	**'Tewkesbury Abbey: the Archaeology and History of a Great Medieval Benedictine Abbey in the West'**
	Ellie March (University of Exeter)
25 April	**THE BERKELEY LECTURE: 'An Excavation in Fladbury Revisited'**
	David Hinton (University of Southampton)

Items for the next issue should be sent to the Editor by **1 September 2022**. Submissions are via email at recorder@worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk.